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it depicts God not only as the Creator and sustainer of the world but, ultimately, as its unifying life force.

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Andreas K. Schuele

III. New Testament

As in pagan Greek sources, the term κόσμος takes on various meanings in the NT: (1) the physical cosmos, in the sense of the world order or universe; (2) the geographical cosmos, in the sense of the inhabited world; and (3) the human world (humankind in general).

1. The Physical Cosmos. a. The Present Constitution of the Cosmos. According to Paul, the present physical cosmos is not stable, as "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:31). Despite this dynamic development, the cosmos is still a source for the knowledge of God: "since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made" (Rom 1:20). In a very similar way, as an exemplary reality, the physical cosmos features in the teachings and parables of Jesus (e.g., Mark 4:1–34; Luke 12:24, 27–28; John 11:9; 12:24–25). Yet according to Paul, the cosmos is indeed also subject to futility and is currently groaning in labor pains (Rom 8:19–22; cf. Plutarch, *Gen. Socr.* 590f). For a specific discussion of views on the generation and final destruction of the cosmos in the NT, cf. "Creation and Cosmogony." As regards its present constitution, the cosmos consists of elements (earth, water, air, and fire), to which humankind in its pre-baptismal past was enslaved (Gal 4:3; cf. Col 2:20) but from which one is saved through the death of Christ (Gal 6:14). In line with this, the author of Colossians warns his readers against the danger of being taken "captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elements of the cosmos, and not according to Christ" (2:8) and exhorts his readers to "die away" from these physical elements through identification with Christ in baptism (2:20). Besides the

elements, there are other cosmological and astrological powers, which are in the process of being subjected by Christ (1 Cor 15:24–28). This means that there are visible and invisible aspects to the cosmos, where the invisible influences and impacts the visible (cf. Col 1:16), rendering a strong transcendental involvement as a means of salvation necessary. And the author of Ephesians acknowledges the (planetary) influence of the κοσμοκράτορες (Eph 6:12). But Paul is convinced that nothing will prevail against the Creator: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38–39). Similarly the author of Revelation emphasizes that Christ holds the seven (planetary) stars, which are closely identified with angels (1:20), in his hands (1:16; 2:1; 3:1). At the same time the church, symbolized by a woman, is "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1) – a reference to the 12 zodiac signs. These images convey the same message as the Pauline view that everything is held together in Christ (Col 1:17). Both Christ and the church are depicted as ruling over the cosmos. Some passages give further insight into how the cosmos is perceived: it consists of the earth and several heavenly spheres. Paul talks about being "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2). Whereas these heavens, together with the lower parts of the earth (the underworld?), are part of the cosmos, God's true residence lies "far above all heavens" (Eph 4:9–10). It seems that besides the creation which has been created by God, there is also a "human creation," which consists of institutions such as that of emperors and governors (1 Pet 2:13–14) that – in a sense – parallel the divine creation of the cosmos.

b. The Physical Cosmos as Scene of Action. The physical cosmos is the scene of action into which "God sent his Son" amidst the elements that exert their enslaving power on all humankind (Gal 4:3–5). Christ is said to have entered into the cosmos (Heb 10:5; cf. John 6:14; 9:39; 10:36; 11:27; 18:37; 1 John 4:9). As the true light he "has come into the cosmos" (John 3:19; cf. 12:46; see also Rev 2:28; 22:16). Within the cosmos, he meets "his own who were in the cosmos" (John 13:1). This cosmic scene is subsequently left behind: "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father" (John 16:28; cf. 17:11).

c. The Hierarchical Nature of Physical Reality. From various passages, it is clear that the visible cosmos is only part of a larger reality. It points towards an invisible creator (Rom 1:20). If this hierarchical, multilayered nature of reality is misunderstood,

people are prone to worship and serve “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom 1:25). In that sense, in an almost metaphorical way, Paul strongly differentiates between God and cosmos. According to Paul, “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19). He differentiates between “the wisdom of the cosmos” and “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:20–29; 3:19–20), between “the spirit of the cosmos” and “the Spirit that is from God” (2:12). Parallels from Greek philosophers, however, show that this differentiation is not anti-philosophical but is also employed by philosophers to criticize the sophists, who do not receive the education from heaven, but only human education (Dio Chrysostom, 4 *Regn.* 4.27–35). The point Paul makes seems to be that if the cosmos is only seen from a superficial perspective, it becomes an enslaving place from which one can be saved only through baptism (Gal 3:27–4:5; cf. 6:14).

In a somewhat comparable way, the author of Hebrews distinguishes between a heavenly, invisible, hypercosmic sanctuary and a “cosmic sanctuary” (Heb 9:1; cf. 4:14; 7:26; 9:23–24); the former is “the greater and perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Heb 9:11). According to Paul, the proper attitude for dealing with this multi-layered character of reality is reflected in the following exhortation: “let those who deal with the world be as though they had no dealings with it” (1 Cor 7:31). This detachment from the cosmos also finds its expression in the view that “we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these” (1 Tim 6:7–8). In John, the double nature of reality comes to the fore in the assertion that Christ and his followers are “from above” and not – like the unbelievers – “from below.” They are not “of this cosmos” (John 8:23); they “do not belong to the cosmos” (15:18–19; 17:14–16). The difference is between being from God and being from the cosmos (1 John 4:4–5). Whereas the unbelievers have been born only once, believers have been born twice (John 3:3–8). Their natural origins lie in the cosmos, in “the will of man,” but their true, transcendental origins are directly linked to God (1:12–13).

d. Dualistic and anti-Dualistic Views. Some NT passages seem to have strong dualistic overtones. The author of 1 John addresses those who possess “the life of the cosmos” (3:17). And in the Gospel of John we find “the ruler of this cosmos” (12:31; 14:30; 16:8), even if he is said to be driven out and to have been condemned. However, the NT authors distance themselves from the fully dualistic consequences that these diverse applications of the term “cosmos” seem to imply, or even to criticize the underlying negative world-view. According to 1 Timothy, “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with

thanksgiving” (4:4–5). John also refers to creation through the Word and even speaks of “the joy of having brought a human being into the cosmos” (16:21). And Jesus, according to John, does not release the disciples from the world but, just as the Father has “sent me into the cosmos, so I have sent them into the cosmos” (17:18). This is in tune with other anti-gnostic statements (cf. 1 John 5:6; 2 John 7).

2. The Geographical Cosmos. The cosmos is also the geographical and/or political cosmos. It is frequently stressed that the gospel is proclaimed throughout the known or inhabited world. The apostles act as theatrical players on a cosmic stage (1 Cor 4:9). And the Christian faith as lived out by Christian communities is proclaimed and believed throughout the world (Rom 1:8; 1 Tim 3:16; Mark 14:9; 16:15). Globally, it is on the rise (Col 1:6, 23; cf. 1 Pet 5:9). At the same time, the Gospels emphasize that it is useless to gain the whole world but to forfeit one’s own life (Mark 8:36). Jesus himself is tempted by the devil, who promises him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus submits to him (Matt 4:8). And according to Revelation, “the kingdom of the world” will ultimately pass into the possession of God and Christ (11:15).

3. The Human World. a. The Sinfulness and Ignorance of Humankind. Apart from many neutral references to the world as the world of human beings, the human world is also characterized as a deeply immoral place. According to Paul it is simply impossible not to associate with the immoral of this world, “since you would then need to go out of the world” (1 Cor 5:10). Sin came into the world through Adam (Rom 5:12–13). Yet, it is possible to live in the world in harmony with one’s conscience: “we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity” (2 Cor 1:12). Consequently Paul urges his readers to “be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world” (Phil 2:15). This sinful world did not recognize the true light when it came into the world (John 1:9–10; cf. 14:17; 1 John 3:1). Christians are exhorted not to follow “the course of this world” (Eph 2:2) and to escape “from the corruption that is in the world because of lust” and from “the defilements of the world” (2 Pet 1:4; 2:20; see also 1 John 2:15–17). In their pre-Christian past they had no hope and were “without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). They need to be trained “to renounce impiety and ‘cosmic passions’” (Titus 2:12).

b. The Reconciliation and Salvation of Humankind. Yet God was in the process of reconciling this sinful human world to himself (2 Cor 5:19), and “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). In John’s view, too, God’s Son was sent “in order that the world might be saved through him”

(3:16–17). He is “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14) and the atoning sacrifice “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2; cf. John 1:29). He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46), just as Christians, too, are the light of this world (Matt 5:14).

c. The Judgment of the World. The human world is also subjected to God’s judgment. God “did not spare the ancient world, even though he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly” (2 Pet 2:5; cf. 3:6 and Heb 11:7). But in the future, too, at the end of time, there will be a judgment of the world; the whole world will be held accountable to God (Rom 3:19). Before God “no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account” (Heb 4:13). According to John, this judgment of the cosmos already takes place, before the end of time, in the response of people to Christ (3:17–21).

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George H. van Kooten

IV. Greco-Roman Antiquity

The early Greeks imagined the earth as a disk, circled by the river Oceanus. While the sky above was the abode of the gods, the earth was rooted deep down in Tartarus, and beyond Oceanus lay Hades, the realm of the dead. The giant Atlas supported the vault of heaven, and at night the chariot of the Sun glided back on Oceanus from the point of sunset to the point of sunrise. This picture is in several points reminiscent of Egyptian and Babylonian cosmology.

The Presocratics made a new start. They discarded mythical stories and explained phenomena of heaven and earth in terms of physical substances and processes (alteration, mixture, compression, etc.), attempting various models, which usually started with a primeval substance (Gk. ἀρχή; the term is, however, Aristotelian). In general, they stressed the unity and coherence of the universe and minimized the contrast between heaven and earth, appreciating the “Whole” and its beautiful structure, the Greek term κόσμος (properly, “ornament” or “order,” “organized structure”) gradually coming to be applied to it (beginning with Heracli-

tus but not current before the 4th cent. BCE). A relation between universe and humanity often emerged: the substances and powers that constitute the cosmos are the same that constitute the human being (e.g., Eryximachus in Plato, *Symp.* 185E–88E). This relation is the essence of the formula “Man is a μικρός κόσμος” (“small world”; Democritus VS 68B34; the contrasting term “macrocosm” is a faulty coinage appearing in the 14th cent. and actually meaning “long world”!). However, speculations about a plurality of worlds also arose, especially by the atomists, as did those about the possibility of inhabitants of the astral bodies, either disembodied human souls or separate living beings. In the Hellenistic period, a new concept of interaction between astral and human worlds emerged: astrology, an amalgam between Babylonian and Egyptian mantic traditions and Greek astronomy.

The Pythagoreans introduced another important aspect with their stress on the significance of numbers and proportions. With number symbolism most likely as their starting point, they then discovered that the notes of a musical scale could be defined by mathematical proportions, the seven notes of a scale were connected with the seven planets, resulting in the doctrine of a “harmony of the spheres” (first described by Plato, *Pol.* 616C–617C). Hence, ἁρμονία became a catchword for the structure of the universe. Plato combined Pythagorean number-cosmology with physical cosmology in his *Timaeus*. (This dialogue was meant as a tentative sketch; the narrative is several times characterized as εἰκὼς λόγος, “a probable story,” but was in later centuries taken as authoritative dogma.) For Plato, it was the cosmos itself that, by its regular revolutions, taught mankind the numbers and, consequently, philosophy (*Tim.* 47A). In addition, a Pythagorean background most likely lies behind Plato’s assumption of a “world soul,” which makes the world a ζῷον, a “living being,” though this concept is closely connected to a basic tenet of Plato, that every movement is in the last resort caused by soul, the only “self-moved” thing (*Phaedr.* 245C; *Leg.* 897A). Plato even considered the individual to be celestial bodies ensouled (*Leg.* 898 D).

A particularly successful line of development began quite early with Anaximander. He postulated the vault of the sky must be supplemented by an invisible hemisphere below the earth so that the stars could trace complete circles. Consequently, the earth must be suspended in the middle, later it was viewed as spherical (Parmenides, Anaxagoras; the first description of the terrestrial globe in a mythical narrative is by Plato, *Phaed.* 110B–112E). Development of geometry suggested the circles of longitude and latitude, and the final result was the world map of Ptolemaeus based on these coordinates. In the Hellenistic period, plausible estimates emerged for the size of the earth as well as for the

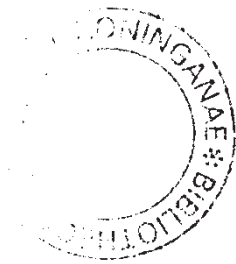
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